

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ELDERS

Robert Stapleton

INTRODUCTION:

1. This lesson deals with how a congregation of the Lord's church acquires elders to fill the role God has given them.
 - A. We have discussed the need for such leaders.
 1. Now it is time to see how this is to be done.
2. To simplify the procedure we can say that, (1) men must first qualify for the position, and (2) they must be appointed to the task.
 - A. With this in mind we begin by asking and answering what does it take for men to become qualified?
 - B. And then we will ask and answer how should those who are qualified be appointed.

BODY:

1. The Qualifications Of Elders:
 - A. Whenever a discussion arises concerning the eldership of the church, the most discussed questions are likely to be those which have to do with the qualifications.
 1. A discussion of such is fine.
 - A. But this should not be done to the point of overlooking the work of the elder.
 1. Far too many times we indicate a relative unconcern about the elders' work, just so they are "qualified".
 - B. The qualifications of elders are listed in two passages of Scripture 1 Timothy 3:2 - 7; Titus 1:5-9.
 - C. The qualifications listed - 1 Tim. 3:2-7.
 1. Before we look at this text though, let us consider 1 Timothy 3:1.
 - A. The desire here is not one of the qualifications, even though without this desire one would not seek for the position.
 2. "Blameless" - Anepileptos - without reproach, one with whom no fault can be found.
 3. "The husband of one man" - not a polygamous man.
 - A. Not speaking of a remarried widower,
 - B. The right of Scriptural remarriage carries with it all rights of marriage.
 4. "Vigilant" - Nephaios - temperate, sensible, one possessing the quality of clear thinking.
 5. "Sober" - Sophron - of sound mind, self-controlled, sober minded.
 6. "Of good behavior" - speaks of one's ability to organize his life.
 7. "Given to hospitality" - an indication of love for one's fellow man.
 8. "Apt to teach" - skilled at teaching, qualified to teach.
 9. "Not given to wine" - not a drunk.
 10. "No striker" - not a violent man.

11. "Not greedy of filthy lucre" - free from the love of money.
 12. "Patient" - Hupomone - literally one who is patient in trials incident to service.
 13. "Not a brawler" - Amachos - not quarrelsome or contentious.
 14. "Not covetous" - Aphilarguros - being without covetousness, not a lover of money.
 15. "One that ruleth his own house" - one who manages his own home.
 16. "Having his children in subjection" - having control over his children.
 17. "Not a novice" - not a new convert.
 18. "Have a good report" - must be spoken well of by those outside of the church.
- D. The qualifications listed - Titus 1:5-9.
1. "Blameless" - Anenkletos - Literally to have nothing held to one's account.
 - A. To be above reproach.
 2. "The husband of one wife" - not a polygamous man.
 - A. Not speaking or a remarried widower.
 3. "Having faithful children" - literally, believing children.
 4. "Not selfwilled" - Authades - not one who is dominated by self-interest or inconsiderate of others.
 5. "Not soon angry" - not quick tempered.
 6. "Not given to wine" - not a drunkard.
 7. "No striker" - not violent.
 8. "Not given to filthy lucre" - not greedy for dishonest gain.
 - A. Not involved in questionable money making schemes.
 9. "A lover of hospitality" - Philoxenos - hospitable.
 10. "A lover of good men" - one who loves that which is good.
 11. "Sober" - Sophron - of sound mind, self-controlled, sober minded.
 12. "Just" - Dikaios - as it relates to the fulfilling of duties.
 13. "Holy" - Hosios - religiously right, as opposed to what is unrighteous or polluted.
 14. "Temperate" - Enkrates - denotes exercising self-control.
 15. "Holding fast the faithful word" - must hold firm to the sure word as taught.
2. Applying The Qualifications:
- A. The first qualification - which underlies all the rest - is that the elder must be a faithful Christian.
 1. Sometimes a congregation may get so caught up in other matters concerning the appointment of elders that they overlook the most evident.
 - B. Most of the qualifications are to be displayed by every Christian.
 1. Actually, the elder is not held to a higher standard than others.
 - A. Consider the following chart:

WHAT ELDERS ARE TO BE, ALL CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE

ELDERS	CHARACTERISTIC	ALL CHRISTIANS
1 Tim. 3:2	Blameless	1 Tim. 5:7; 6:14
1 Tim. 3:2	Vigilant	1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7; 5:8

1 Tim. 3:2	Sober	Tit. 2:2,5; Rom. 12:3
1 Tim. 3:2	Hospitable	Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2
1 Tim. 3:2	Apt to teach	Heb. 5:12
1 Tim. 3:3	Not given to wine	Tit. 2:3; Eph. 5:18
1 Tim. 3:3	Patient	Phil. 4:5; Col. 3:13; Tit. 3:2
1 Tim. 3:3	Not a brawler	Jas. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:24
1 Tim. 3:3	Not greedy of filthy lucre	1 Tim. 6:10; 2 Tim. 3:2
1 Tim. 3:4	Children in subjection	Eph. 6:1-4
1 Tim. 3:7	Good report from without	1 Pet. 2:12-16
Tit. 1:8	Just	Col. 4:1
Tit. 1:8	Holy	Eph. 4:24; 1 Tim. 2:8
Tit. 1:8	Temperate	Gal. 5:23

- C. Many of the qualifications are matters of degree.
1. Since we all sin and make mistakes, it is not possible to expect that the elder will be 100 per cent perfect in all of these qualifications.
 2. What is expected though, is that the elders will have each of these qualification to a great extent.
 - A. Even though the qualifications are often a matter of degree, the elder must noticeably possess them.
- D. We should look for the purpose behind the qualifications.
1. In some cases the purpose is given.
 - A. See 1 Tim. 3:4.
 1. Why? - see 1 Tim. 3:5.
 - B. See 1 Tim. 3:6.
 1. Why? - "Lest being lifted up with pride he fall in condemnation..."
 - C. See 1 Tim. 3:7.
 1. Why? - "Lest he fall into reproach..."
 - D. See Titus 1:9.
 1. Why? - "That he may be able by sound doctrine..."
 - E. Even if the purpose is not given, we should try to determine it.
 2. We should consider how each qualification might affect our decision.
 - A. This helps us to see why having believing children is so important.
 - B. It also helps us to see how that man's ability to father a child is not under consideration.
 1. This then would allow a man who had adopted a child (or children) to serve.
- E. We need to avoid extremes regarding the qualifications.
1. Many times we apply the qualifications so strictly that no man could ever qualify.
 - A. Others, on the other hand, make so lax the qualifications that almost anyone can "qualify."
 1. They say that a certain man will "grow" into the job.
 2. The point is that somewhere in between these two extremes lies the middle

ground in which the church can properly appoint men to the office of the elder.

- F. In the end we must leave each congregation free to determine who meets the qualifications for their eldership.
 - 1. If congregational autonomy means anything, it means that a congregation has the right to:
 - A. Make its own decisions.
 - B. To choose and appoint men as elders according to its understanding of those qualifications.
- 3. Appointing Elders:
 - A. What method should be followed so that qualified men can be chosen and appointed to serve as elders in the local church?
 - 1. The N. T. indicates that in one case an evangelist (Titus) was to ordain elders - Tit. 1:5.
 - 2. In another case Paul and Barnabas ordained elders - Acts 14:23.
 - A. In neither case are we shown the particular procedure that was followed when these men were ordained.
 - B. How should elders be selected?
 - 1. The N. T. does not specifically answer this question, but it does provide, in Acts 6, one example of men being set apart for a specific task.
 - 2. Here is what happened in that case:
 - A. The apostles set forth the qualifications - Acts 6:2, 3.
 - B. The church as a whole chose from among its members the men who met those qualifications - Acts 6:5.
 - C. The apostles, by laying hands on them, set them to work their task - Acts 6:6.
 - 3. This example suggests a good procedure for the selection and appointment of elders today.

CONCLUSION:

- 1. Great care should be taken in the selection of elders.
 - A. It is easier to make one an elder than to "unmake" one.
 - 1. Trying to remove a man from this position is always difficult.
 - A. Especially if that man has sought that position out of pride or other personal motive.
 - B. There should always be a high degree of agreement of the entire church on the men being selected.
 - 1. If this is not the case then the men under consideration should not be appointed.

ELDER'S DUTY IN MEETING THE FORCES OF ERROR

Robert Stapleton

INTRODUCTION:

1. A vitally important area in which elders must lead the local congregation is that of meeting various errors which confront the cause of Christ.
 - A. The Bible very clearly teaches that elders bear the responsibility of doing such.
 1. Elders must be willing to lead in the defense of the gospel against error.
2. Paul gave such instructions in relation to the qualifications of elders in Titus 1:9-11.
 - A. This verse provides clear insight in regard to this responsibility and duty.
 1. Titus had been left in Crete in the midst of perilous times.
 2. Verses 10-16 indicate that morally corrupt, false teachers had entered among the brethren to sow seeds of discord and confusion.
 - A. These sought to turn the faithful away from the truth into error.
 3. To stop these false teachers from "overthrowing whole houses," it was necessary to silence them.
 - A. With this in mind Paul said that it was the elders who had to be capable of confronting these false teachers and prevent them from destroying the church.
3. With this in mind let us consider this role in the church today.

BODY:

1. In returning to Titus 1:9 the phrase "Holding to..." means not only to adhere to the truth but also to be devoted to it and to take an interest in it.
 - A. The same word is used in Matthew 6:24 where Jesus spoke of the inability of a man to serve two masters as he will "hold to one, and despise the other..."
 1. The elders must be devoted to the "faithful word."
 - A. This, of course, refers to that definite, fixed body of doctrine, which had been taught by God's inspired servants.
 - B. Adhering to and being devoted to the true doctrine will enable elders to accomplish a two-fold task:
 1. First, they will be able to "exhort in sound doctrine."
 - A. The word "exhort" conveys the idea of urgently imploring or encouraging someone to be faithful to God and His word - Acts 2:40; 14:22; Jude 3.
 - B. The word "sound" is from the word that literally means to be in good health.
 1. It is used in the N.T. concerning the correct or true doctrine in contrast to different doctrines which are contrary to the truth - 1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3.
 - C. Thus to "Exhort in sound doctrine" refers primarily to the ability to strengthen those in the faith so that they can recognize and meet error.
 2. Second, elders will be able to "convict the gainsayers."
 - A. Several concepts are inherent in the word "convict."
 1. Bringing to light, exposing, demonstrating.

2. Convincing.
3. Reproving, correcting.
- B. The word "gainsayers" literally means those who speak against or contradict the truth.
- C. Elders, therefore, must be capable of exposing the error of false teachers by demonstrating the truthfulness of the gospel.
 1. Undoubtedly this is why an elder must to "apt" to teach - 1 Tim. 3:2.
- C. To "exhort" and to "convict" have a durative quality.
 1. The implication here is that it is the elder's duty to continually build up the brethren in the truth, and to continually protect them from the inroads of error.
 - A. It is not enough for the elder to be able to denounce error.
 - B. He must also be able to meet it and refute it so that the purity of the gospel is preserved and that the false teachers may be saved – Tit. 1 :13.
2. There are many other passages, which help us to see the elder's duty of leading the congregation in meeting error - Acts 15:6-29; 20:28-31; Heb. 13:17.
3. Let us now make a practical application for the eldership today.
 - A. In order to properly lead the church in meeting the forces of error, the elders must be capable of analyzing the situations confronting the church.
 1. Paul and John cautioned their readers to be aware of false teachers and their attack on the church - 2 Tim. 4:3,4; 1 John 4:1-3.
 2. Elders must have the same kind of foresight that will enable them to recognize sources of error and be prepared to deal with such.
 3. Elders must also be capable of making plans to meet the current and future forces of evil.
 4. They must also be capable of leading the congregation in the furtherance of these plans.
 - A. They do this by making every use of scriptural means, i.e. Bible classes, sermons, special classes, etc.

CONCLUSION:

1. These are perilous times for the church.
 - A. They call for capable and prepared leaders.
 1. Leaders who are fully devoted to the truth.
 2. Leaders who are capable of preparing themselves and other Christians to meet all challenges - Acts 20:28.

ELDER'S DUTY IN KEEPING THE CHURCH PURE

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INTRODUCTION:

1. God has never done anything without a purpose.
 - A. When He gave the qualifications for elders, it was for a purpose.
2. The word "must," in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:7, is there for a reason.
 - A. Just as the elder "must" be qualified, he "must" discharge his responsibilities to himself, and to the congregation over which he presides.
3. No greater responsibility ever rested upon any man that which rests upon the elders of the Lord's church.
 - A. These men who are commissioned by God are to be "elders" (1 Pet. 5:1), "bishops" (1 Tim. 3:1), "overseers" (Acts 20:28), "pastors" (Eph. 4:11) and their functions can easily be seen from the terms "he ruleth" (Rom. 12:8; 1 Thess. 5:12), "the ones that have rule" (Heb. 13:7), and "shepherds and teachers" (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28).
4. Of equal importance to these words are the words, which are often overlooked, "steward" (Tit. 1:7), and "watchmen" (Acts 20:21; Heb. 13:17).
 - A. Here is where I want us to concentrate in this lesson.
 1. The elders' responsibility of watching over the church in order to keep it pure.

BODY:

1. From the passages that we have already noted, the church is to submit itself unto the authority of the eldership which is over it.
 - A. Three words need to be considered by the church in relation to this point:
 1. "Obey."
 2. "Rule."
 3. "Submit."
2. Today sins of the world have crept into the church to the point that it is often difficult to distinguish it from the world.
 - A. We see unpaid debts, covetousness, animosity, pride, immorality, unjustness, false doctrine, adultery, and almost every other kind of sin imaginable in the church today.
 1. It is as if cancer has taken over the body of Christ, with the intent to destroy it as quickly as possible.
 - B. This spiritual malignancy must be stopped!
 1. A church will only grow with clean lives, holy hands and discipline.
 - C. Here is where the elders' responsibility to purity comes in.
 1. The church's spiritual appetite is formed by the diet it is fed on.
 - A. The church's overseers are going to give account to God for conditions in the church.
 1. If sin prevails, the elders will answer for such!
 2. God needs men of the Book (i.e. the Bible).
 - A. Men of the Book, when negligent in their duties, must know that they are

jeopardizing the souls of men and playing with hell fire - Prov. 18:9; Jere. 48:10; Hos. 4:6.

3. Members absent themselves from such congregations week after week and nothing is done to find the cause nor to bring them back to the Lord.
4. The unruly member of the church continues to embarrass the faithful body by his actions and nothing is done to disassociate the church from such an individual.
 - A. Due to this the church becomes a thing of ridicule in the community.
4. There are many methods of true discipline.
 - A. Self-discipline.
 1. Each member of the church should be encouraged by the elders to properly discipline themselves.
 2. There are many Scriptures which indicate the need for such - 1 Cor. 9:27; Gal. 5:24; Rom. 12:9, 21; 1 Pet. 2:23; Phil. 4:5.
 3. In almost every aspect of life there is the need for self-discipline.
 - B. Teaching and admonishing.
 1. No one can develop in the Christian life without a continuous growth in knowledge.
 - A. Christians live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" - Mt. 4:4.
 2. With this in mind we see the necessity of the Bible being taught to each congregation.
 - A. This points to the responsibility of the elders to tend the flock that it may grow - Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 2:2.
 - C. Training in service.
 1. Knowledge alone is not sufficient.
 - A. Development comes through the practice of knowledge.
 2. Elders need to be vitally involved in the training of their congregation.
 - D. Encouragement.
 1. Elders can do a great service to the church by encouragement.
 - E. Reproving and rebuking.
 1. There are times when a public reproof is timely.
 - A. This is especially true when some public sin is persistently indulged in.
 2. Elders may not always be popular in doing this but it is necessary and a part of their responsibility.

CONCLUSION:

1. As we can see, true discipline involves many things.
 - A. As elders who desire the best for their congregations they will seek to carry out these responsibilities.

THE ELDER'S ROLE IN CHURCH DISCIPLINE

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INTRODUCTION:

1. The subject of church discipline almost always brings up some sort of excuse as to why the church should not be involved in such when we think of it in respect to the withdrawal of members. .
 - A. However, all of the excuses pale in significance when confronted with the numerous Scriptures which clearly show the obligation of such when necessary.
2. Except for a total disregard of what the Bible says, one cannot deny that discipline may involve withdrawal from unruly members.
 - A. This is clearly a command of the Scriptures.
 - B. Note the following:
 1. Romans 16:17.
 2. 1 Corinthians 5:11.
 3. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15.
 4. 1 Timothy 6:5.
 5. 2 Timothy 3:5
3. As to the role of elders in this matter it must be understood that, as in all matters pertaining to the local church, the elders must assume a leadership role.
4. However, we must also understand that true church discipline involves many things of which we will give consideration to in this section.

BODY:

1. It is the business of the elders to feed the church - Acts 20:28.
 - A. They further are responsible in helping the weak members of the church to become stronger - Acts 20:35.
 - B. They are also to watch after the souls of those under their charge – Heb. 13:17.
 1. A part of this responsibility will be carried out in seeing that proper discipline is carried out within the local congregation.
2. When we speak of church discipline we speak of those things pertaining to the teaching, training, collection, and development of its members.
 - A. All of this has as its goal the ultimate salvation of every member of the church.
 - B. We should not entertain the idea that church discipline has to do only with getting rid of unruly members, although it does involve this.
 1. The withdrawal of such is to be resorted to only when all other disciplinary measures have failed.
3. In every well-regulated body, whether family, state, or church, discipline must be maintained.
 - A. To fail to do so will result in that body going to pieces.
 - B. True discipline promotes peace and happiness, as well as efficiency and development of character.
 - C. Imagine a church where no discipline exists.
 1. Where there is no systematic effort made to instruct members.

2. Where there is no program set forth to train them to become efficient workers in the kingdom.
3. Elders must know that they are responsible to tend, feed, watch, warn, lead, provide for, protect, unite the sheep, guard, and teach.
 - A. They are to "hold to the faithful word" - Tit. 1:9.
4. A true "overseer" of the flock knows that all that concerns the church is under his care.
 - A. He well understands that he cannot shirk that duty and still be pleasing to God.
3. The organization of the local church is an established order - Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5.
 - A. This organization is the only medium through which God is going to accomplish His work - Eph. 3:10; Acts 13:1-3; 14:25-28; 11:27-30.
 1. Elders are to "oversee" the local church, and those who plea for a restoration of the church of the N. T. must strive to be loyal to that plea in all respects.
 - B. It is important that elders see that there is a body of truth that must be upheld in regard to the doctrine of the church.
 1. God has given unto "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" - 2 Pet. 1:3.
 2. He further has shown us those things that are the fruit of the spirit - Gal. 5:22, 23.
 3. He has also given us the Christian graces so that we may grow as He would have us to do - 2 Pet. 1:5-8.
 - C. With these in mind they must lead us in the path of righteousness.
 1. Keeping the church pure is of utmost importance.
 2. And the only way that this is going to happen is for the elders to lead us in these matters.